

AJO COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE



Editor: Nina Altshul

Spring 2010 / Week 1 of 13

Planned harvest: Carrots, Sweet Potatoes, Valencia Oranges, Mustard Greens, Head Lettuce (Romaine), Dill, Purple-top Turnips, Basil (plant).

Welcome to the Spring 2010 session. As warm-weather crops like tomatoes, melons and corn are starting to get planted at the farm by Farmer Frank and his team, on the verge of our eighth season our little group is making a big step: as of the first week of this new season, we are finally going to start holding our pickups at a public location – at the Ajo Community Garden. I for one am very excited about this move. Not only does the garden lend itself naturally to being a veggie distribution site—after the rains the greens and the colors are the most compelling advertisement for including more of the locally-grown fresh foods into one’s diet—but being easily accessible and with abundant parking space, the garden has plenty of room to set up our tables and host other public events. Additional Crooked Sky Farm produce will be available for sale at the farm stand, but this will also be an opportunity for some of the gardeners to sell some of their produce, too. Some wonder whether Ajo residents are ready for such a local veggie treat – I say, let’s tell all of our friends and neighbors, continue doing all the fun things we do, and enjoy it! Thanks to the Ajo Community Garden Consortium and the International Sonoran Desert Alliance for supporting this effort, and as always, thank you, members, for your continuous support!

Member Day at the Farm: Speaking of fun things to do, here’s a day you want to put on your calendars: on Sunday, April 18, the Crooked Sky team is planning to have their CSA members (and their friends) come visit their South Phoenix field. The event will probably run from 10 am to 1 pm, and will include a farm tour, food cooked by Jen, Tania and Victoria, and as always, fun kids’ activities. Also, this is an opportunity to see where the farm is and see what’s growing, as well as ask Farmer Frank everything you have ever wanted to know about farming in Arizona. More details to come soon...

Find of the Week: You don’t want to miss The Nourished Kitchen (at nourishedkitchen.com), a website dedicated to real food, examining food philosophies and asking some tough questions, like who do we eat, what do we value, and why. The website recently received coverage from CNN because of their 28-day **Real Food Challenge** (<http://www.cnn.com/2010/HEALTH/02/23/real.food.challenge/index.html>). Blogger Jennifer McGruther challenged readers to eat real food for a month, starting with the instruction on Day One to purge the pantry of processed foods, which meant that everything with refined oils, white flour, sugar, low- and skimmed-milk products, margarine, processed cheeses, refined salt and dried pastas had to go. Neither a chef nor a nutritionist, Jenny taps into our traditional food wisdom and claims that real health comes from real food, and real food never comes from a box. The philosophy behind traditional food is similar to the slow food movement, which originated in Italy more than two decades ago in response to the growing impact of fast food on the traditional Mediterranean lifestyle. It also espouses locally grown foods and traditional preparations. The aim of this challenge was to show people that they can eat only real food for 28 days; however, despite a high level of healthy and local and organic food awareness, a lot of the participants found the challenge much more challenging than they anticipated. And time-consuming. Surprised?

Here’s what Jenny says about the much disputed **agave nectar**: Despite being heralded as a natural sweetener, agave nectar is problematic because of it is manufactured by extracting the natural juice of the agave plant and subjecting it to an intense process. After extraction the juice is forced through a series of centrifuges that remove substances from the whole juice and further clarify the color of the liquid. At that point, the extraction is sent through a heated centrifuge which warms the liquid. Manufacturers then add enzymes to the juice, which breaks down the agave’s natural sugars and transforms them into high-fructose. In a nutshell, food producers began manufacturing agave nectar as we know it as late as the 1990s, and it is thus a very new addition to the human diet and hard for our bodies to digest and metabolize. (Read the whole article at <http://nourishedkitchen.com/when-natural-foods-arent-natural-agave-nectar/>)

RECIPES ETC.

Warm Grapefruit Delight

Tired of eating your grapefruit in the same way every morning? Our Downtown Phoenix market customer, fellow yogi and ex-Yugoslavian Anna Marie suggested roasting it for a warm, yummy, comfy dessert. Here's my version: Start by slicing the grapefruit in half, and with a knife, loosen up the meat inside the peel. This step is very important and will make it easier for you to scoop the meat out with a spoon later on; also, try avoiding poking through the skin with the knife. Then place your grapefruit halves in an oven-proof dish, sprinkle with some cinnamon, sugar or maple syrup, and if you are really feeling decadent, top with a little bit of butter. Bake at 350 °F for at least 15 minutes, or until the top starts caramelizing. Serve warm.

Be forewarned: the sweetness of the dessert will depend on how sweet your grapefruit is, so try it before you add your sweetener.

Stovetop Vegetable Cassoulet

(submitted by Andrea Galyean, adapted from *Vegetable Heaven*, by Mollie Katzen)

Nina's tip: try adapting this recipe using the potatoes, beans, carrots and greens from the farm!

Yield: 6 servings.

1 pound shallots, peeled and minced (in a food processor is fine)

1 tablespoon olive oil

2 tablespoons butter

1 pound (about 3 cups) very small potatoes, halved or larger potatoes, cubed (Yukon Gold creamers are especially good here)

1 ¼ teaspoons salt

1 teaspoon dried sage (or 1 tablespoon fresh, minced)

1 teaspoon dried marjoram or oregano (or 1 tablespoon fresh, minced)

1 teaspoon dried thyme (or 1 tablespoon fresh, minced)

1 cup dry red wine

2 to 3 cups baby carrots (or larger carrots cut into slender, 2-inch long sticks)

1 tablespoon garlic, minced

1 ½ cups vegetable broth (or bouillon)

6 cups cooked white pea or navy beans (or 3 15-ounce cans, rinsed and drained)

freshly ground black pepper to taste

2 to 3 packed cups chopped fresh mustard greens (1/2 pound)

3 cups good, coarse bread crumbs (cracker crumbs or similar also work well)

Heat the olive oil and 1 tablespoon of the butter together in a Dutch oven or in a large, deep skillet with a lid. Add the shallots, stir, and cook uncovered over medium-low heat for about 10 minutes. Stir in the potatoes until they are well coated with the butter and oil. Cover and cook over medium-low heat for about 5 minutes, then add the salt, cover again and cook for 10 minutes more.

Stir in the herbs, wine, carrots and garlic. Cover and cook for about 15 minutes over low heat. Add the broth and beans, and bring to a boil. Lower heat, cover and cook until the potatoes and carrots are completely tender (about 25 minutes). Grind in a generous amount of pepper to taste and add salt if necessary. Stir in the mustard greens and remove from heat. Let it sit for about 10 minutes before serving.

Meanwhile, melt the remaining tablespoon of butter in a medium-sized skillet. Add the bread crumbs, and sauté over medium heat for about 10 minutes, or until the crumbs are toasty.

Serve the cassoulet hot, with a generous spoonful of breadcrumbs on top and a final grind of pepper if desired.

Braised Carrots with Ginger

(adapted from *French Women for All Seasons*, by Mireille Guiliano)

4 carrots, about 1 pound

Zest and juice of 1 orange

Zest and juice of 1 lemon

2 tsp finely minced fresh ginger

2 medium onions, peeled and minced

2 Tbsp olive oil

Salt and freshly ground pepper

2 Tbsp unsalted butter

2 Tbsp minced fresh cilantro

Wash the carrots and slice thinly. Toss the carrots with the zest and juice of the orange and lemon, the ginger, onions, and oil, and season with salt and pepper to taste.

Warm the butter in a saucepan. When it is melted, add all the ingredients except the cilantro, and cook over medium-low heat for 20 minutes. Add the fresh cilantro and serve.